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Gender and Evaluation, the launch of EvalGender+

Dr Lyn Alderman, President, Australasian Evaluation Society (AES)

9 September 2015, Australasian Evaluation Society Conference, Melbourne

My name is Lyn Alderman.

I am the President of the Australasian Evaluation Society and at the moment I am at the AES conference 2015 in Melbourne. So I would just like to talk for a few minutes about gender and equity and the evaluation partners push for gender equity plus. So in the AES and in Australia, I think different countries are in different positions. I think in Australia I don't think we feel we need to have this strongest push around gender per se but from the Australasian Evaluation Society what we have done is we have developed a strategy and we have a strategy that has four prongs. And they are value, influence, culture and sustainability.

So when we talk about that it's the value what value is there for you to be a member? What do you get if you are a member of the society? And that's for anywhere so we have special memberships, where we have Indigenous members, where we have corporate members and we have our ordinary members.

What we also do with partnerships, what we do with influence. We are interested in having influence on policy, we are interested in having influence developing evaluation capacity in government departments and government entities and that's an important issue because those people who are in policy are implementing policy. They are also looking at where the funding goes, they are looking at how they are actually spending the national dollar and when we think about that, gender and equity and vulnerable populations and the things that we should be caring about because evaluation should do no harm, and we should not leave any harm in the communities where we go. We should not do any harm and if there are gender and equity issues that need to be addressed then it's our role as evaluators to step into that space.

Now I would like to talk about culture. For us culture is an interesting space, we have many members in New Zealand and many members in Australia but the way Indigenous evaluation is conducted in New Zealand is far more advanced than what is conducted in Australia, so we have a long way to go. So one of the things we believe the AES should be focused on in the next 3-5 years is around culture, developing cultural competencies and evaluation guidelines that will assist Indigenous and non-Indigenous evaluators, that will allow evaluation to occur in vulnerable communities in a way in which again we do no harm. It is about the good of the community and for the good of the funding and for the good of evaluations itself. Sustainability for us as an organisation is really interesting. We have had some turbulence over the last few years and I think societies go through that from time to time, one of the things that we are vulnerable to as a society is around income streams and we spend a lot of time and effort on our conference because our conference is a great generator of income. But we believe we should have a broader agenda there.

Sustainability is not just about sustainability of evaluation in the broader world but it is actually sustainability of our society. We need that sustainability and good governance so that we can say to our members that there is value to participating in this organisation.

Coming back to the gender and equity issue one of the things we are interested in doing is we are looking at equity and gender through the lens of ethics. We think ethics is a place where we can actually offer value to our members. So we will be investigating whether we can have an ethics approval process and an ethics approval committee and this is just new straight of the press. We are just thinking about it now but instead of professionalising the evaluators can we bring standards into all evaluation by offering an ethics approval process, where any independent consultant can put forward a project, for ethical approval by experts in the field. And we believe that is strong evaluation. Now within that ethics approval process there will be those concerns about gender, about equity, about the ways in which we work with vulnerable populations. So I do believe we can introduce really strong standards in that space. So we are quite excited about that. Thank you.